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论图式理论下的叙事语篇理解

On Narrative Text Comprehension Under the Schema
Theory

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Abstract

Reading has long been regarded as an important skill in English learning and teaching. However, many students treat it as a big obstacle in their English learning and teachers need a better teaching method to cope with this reading problem. In view of this, this thesis discusses the comprehension process of narrative text under the Schema Theory, and proposes the teaching method with a schematic awareness.

This thesis reviews the research that has been done on reading with a focus on the Schema Theory. The comprehension process of narrative text is explored by using the Schema Theory to analyze a prototypical narrative text. According to the Schema Theory, three levels of schema, i.e. linguistic schema, content schema and formal schema, will affect the comprehension process. These schemata play a part in the selecting and prediction process, clarifying causal relations and making inferences. An applicational study in narrative text comprehension is also conducted to investigate the practical value of the Schema Theory. It is observed that students' scores of narrative text comprehension test improved after receiving training with a schematic awareness. Great improvements in scores are seen in questions regarding the main idea of texts.

From the analysis, it is concluded that reading comprehension will be more efficient and effective when the reader has a schematic awareness in mind. The teaching of reading under the guidance of the Schema Theory is better than the traditional grammar-oriented and teacher-centered teaching method.

Key words: reading comprehension; narrative text; Schema Theory; story schema

摘 要

在英语的学习和教学中，阅读是一项重要的技能。然而很多学生却视之为英语学习的巨大障碍，而教师们则期望有一种更佳的教学方法来解决阅读教学上的困难。有鉴于此，本文讨论了图式理论下叙事语篇的理解过程，并提出了以图式理论为指导的阅读教学方法。

本文回顾了前人在阅读理解方面所做的研究，并着重回顾了图式理论。文章通过对一篇典型的叙事语篇的分析来探讨叙事语篇的理解过程。根据图式理论，图式的三个层次会影响阅读过程，即语言图式、内容图式和形式图式。这些图式在阅读理解的选择和预测过程、辨别因果关系和做出推断过程起了重要的作用。本文还通过叙事语篇的实证研究来考察图式理论的实用价值。研究发现，学生在接受以图式理论为指导的阅读教学后，叙事语篇理解测验的成绩有了提高，特别是语篇大意理解题的分数有了较大提高。

根据分析，本文认为在图式理论的指导下，阅读理解更加快捷、有效。以图式理论为指导的阅读教学方法比传统的语法导向、教师中心的教学方法更有效。

关键词:阅读理解；叙事语篇；图式理论；故事图式

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Chapter One Introduction

Reading has long been regarded as one significant technique in English teaching and learning. It is also well known that reading is an important skill in daily life. However, when learning English, one of the most difficult problems the students may encounter is reading. Quite a few students in China consider English reading as a big difficulty and one big obstacle in their English learning. Hence, developing reading ability of students has always been one of the primary objectives in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) in China.

Traditionally, readers are supposed to just take in what the author has written. Thus the traditional teaching of reading is to teach students how to decode what has been written by the author and focus more on grammar and vocabulary, which makes students inclined to be passive in class in the long run. Since about the 1960s', however, people have come to realize that readers' active participation is also needed. It is demonstrated that background knowledge and general knowledge of the readers are of great importance to get a deeper understanding. Reading is viewed as the interaction between the reader, the author and the text. As a result, Schema Theory, a main representative of the interactive reading model, gains a great development.

Schema Theory is applied to interpret how readers interact with texts and reach the aim of successfully understanding a text. In addition, Schema Theory explicitly puts forward the important role it plays in the readers' minds and background knowledge. With more and more concern being given to the significant role of background knowledge, much more attention is paid to the application of Schema Theory to the teaching of reading. Scholars home and abroad have conducted quite a number of experimental studies in applying schema theory to EFL reading instruction.

1.1 Research Questions

Since narrative text is a common discourse type encountered by readers, the comprehension process of narrative text under the Schema Theory has drawn great attention. Considering the scope of the study, it is impossible to discuss comprehension of all types of discourse. This thesis will only discuss the narrative text as it is a common discourse type and appears in all kinds of reading comprehension tests.

The thesis aims to prove that when the reading comprehension process of narrative texts is carried out under the guidance of schema theory, reading will be more efficient and effective. Two research questions are thereby proposed:

1. What's the reading comprehension process of narrative texts under the Schema Theory?
2. How does the Schema Theory benefit the teaching of narrative text reading?

1.2 Methodology of the Thesis

This thesis uses the Schema Theory to investigate narrative text comprehension process. In Chapter Three, a prototypical narrative text is analyzed according to the Schema Theory to illustrate how the reading comprehension process goes. In Chapter Four, a two-month applicational study is carried out to investigate how the Schema Theory benefits the teaching of narrative text reading.

1.3 Organization of the Thesis

Altogether this thesis consists of five chapters: introduction, literature review, narrative text comprehension, an applicational study of narrative text comprehension and conclusion.

Chapter One introduces the aim of the study, research questions and the methodology used in the thesis. Chapter Two mainly reviews research on reading and

the Schema Theory. The nature of reading is discussed and the research of reading is introduced in general. Then the three traditional and commonly used reading models, i.e. bottom-up model, top-down model, and interactive model, are put forward to pave the theoretic way for schema-theoretic reading approach. The last section of Chapter Two introduces the historical development, nature, classification and functions of Schema Theory.

Chapter Three discusses more detailedly about schema in narrative text. It starts by introducing the definition of narratives and how the story schema is used in the narrative text by analyzing an example text. The linguistic schema, content schema and formal schema of story are discussed respectively. The way that readers' world knowledge is used in comprehending narratives is also examined, which includes knowledge about people and knowledge of specific content domains. In the last section, the selecting and predicting process, causal relations, and inference making of narrative text comprehension are the questions to be probed. In this chapter a typical narrative text will be analyzed to illustrate the concrete comprehension process.

In Chapter Four an applicational study is analyzed so as to see the practical value of the Schema Theory in comprehending narrative text. A two-month study has been carried out to see how story schema helps in understanding the narrative text. It aims to give students practical advice on taking the reading comprehension tests. Chapter Five concludes the whole thesis by summarizing the narrative text comprehension process in the view of Schema Theory and how the Schema Theory benefits the teaching of reading.

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